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764

tween the kinsmen about the amount of property to be destroyed. Once we saw the sons of a dead man tugging at two fine mats which his sister was folding into the cave. She wished to put them in but the sons opposed her, saying: 'Why should we spend all the mats? We have buried him, he is dead.'

It is held to be most important that earth should not touch the corpse's face, but once the cave has been closed the chief mourners each push a few handfuls of earth into the grave, the rest of the earth is filled in, and the dancers stamp it hard. Soon no sign of the grave remains.

(3) *The terror of death*

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Death to the Nyakyusa is a fearful thing. They believe that the spirit (*mupaka*) of a dead man survives underground (*pan*) in the place of the shades (*abapaka*) and that it can and does visit surviving relatives in dreams and materially affect their destinies. The shades of the dead are one of the final causes with which their religion deals. But contact with them is feared and the function of the ritual at the funeral is 'to drive the shade away'. This ritual begins during the burial (*ifwa*) and continues in a series of rites which last for a month or longer. At the burial itself people's attention is mainly concerned with the death as an emotional event, with the fact that a father, a mother, a kinsman or a neighbour has died; but into the emotional quality of death their religious beliefs enter. With the shades they desire no close contact, for the most usual dreams of the dead are those in which they reproach a man for some sin, or foretell his death; their commonest activity is believed to be the sending of madness and misfortune upon sinful men. Nor is it desirable to join the shades oneself. The place of the shades is a vague and shadowy land where no certain happiness is traditionally believed to be. 'No one', said an old man, 'has ever been there and come back to tell us about it. When the dead come to us in dreams they do not show us where they live nor tell us about their life. We do not know what we shall find there. But we do not think that we shall have happiness, or friendly intercourse.' 'He has died and we shall never meet again,' said another man of his dead neighbour. Some old men, however, have definite theories about the place of the spirits, and all agree that wealth is important there; but these theories have no certainty: 'We are just guessing.' It is certain that the dead continue to live somehow, for they are believed to affect

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761 765 775 the lives and enter the dreams of their kinsmen; but the nature of their survival is uncertain.

775 765 A man, when he dies, is believed to join his ancestors. Until the end of the funeral rites, they say, he is on the way and if the ritual is not properly performed he does not reach them, but troubles the dreams and lives of the survivors until he is properly driven away. 'If you do not perform the ritual for your father or mother you may go mad or else have a slow and lingering death.'

177 775 797 Many of the younger pagans, however, are affected by Christian belief. Young men spoke confidently of going after death 'to a fine country with dancing and feasting and a chief to rule us'. But many old men scoff at such beliefs. 'They have learnt them from the missionaries—how do they know, have they been there to see?' Among some of the younger men also the ritual of death is less important than it used to be. As one Christian said: 'The pagans no longer fear to die away from home—they used to fear very much to die in a strange country (and many still do), they thought: "If I die far from home I shall never reach my ancestors, for people will not bury me properly." Nor do all the young men now fear if they fail to attend a father's funeral ritual.' 'We no longer believe in the old rituals,' said a sophisticated young pagan, 'because we see that the Christians do not do these things and nothing happens to them.'

761 753 754 An additional reason for fearing death is the Nyakyusa belief in the contagious character of many diseases. Death is thought to be caused sometimes by witchcraft, and sometimes by one of a variety of diseases. Of these diseases some are held to be hereditary and to run in families, and they are usually non-contagious; others, and they are usually contagious, are believed to be due to the sorcery of enemies. And the contagion is thought to be spread by an autopsy. It is especially dangerous to relatives; other people do not fear these diseases unless they actually hold the corpse in their arms, or dig the grave, or help to bury it, but all relatives are afraid.

764 Besides the contagion of specific diseases, the corpse itself is held always to have a vaguely defined, but none the less fearful, contagion of its own. And, because of this, all who have had any close contact with the body go to bathe immediately after the burial. Those of the chief mourners who hold the body in their arms, the grave-diggers and those who get down into the grave to bury it, all go to bathe. 'Even when death is no due to a contagious disease

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CHAPTER III

FAREWELL TO THE DEAD

AFTER spending three or four days weeping, and feasting, and dancing, the main body of mourners scatter to their homes, but the close kinsmen remain for a week or two sleeping at the home of the deceased, awaiting the ritual of farewell. The Nyakyusa themselves distinguish three main events in it: the 'picking up of pumpkin-seeds' (*okusola isyungu*) when the chief mourners first begin to wash; the 'shaving of the sprouting hair' (*okutemula ilitemula*) when the beer of inheritance is brewed and the estate divided; and the 'ritual of the gasping cough' (*ingutulo*) when the widows, having lain with the heir, go to visit their parents. The details differ appreciably between Selya and MuNgonde on the one hand, and Kukwe country on the other, and we describe them separately.

1. IN SELYA AND MUNGONDE

(*a*) *The events*

1. *'Picking up pumpkin-seeds.'* The picking up of pumpkin-seeds begins with the formal recognition of the heir, if the deceased was a married man. The heir and widows are suddenly seized and hustled, resisting, into the mourning hut. If they go willingly 'it seems as if they wished their relative to die'. The officiant smears their chests with ash and puts a strand of the *ilingalangafwa* creeper on each one's right shoulder. These are both signs of mourning, and the creeper is also a sign that we have given him the inheritance. After a few minutes the heir and widows are formally summoned to come out of the hut, and they go off to wash away the ash and creeper in the stream. But first, the flowering head of a banana is buried in the courtyard near the door of the mourning hut and the grave of the deceased. If he was not a married man and there are no widows to be inherited, the ritual begins with this. The banana flower is explicitly identified with the corpse: it must face in the direction from which the ancestors came, as the corpse does; if the deceased is a male the flowering head is from a plantain (*isuki*); if a female from a sweet banana (*isjali* or *isukyi*) or

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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765 765 766 776 [242] 765 763 765 765 765

tindya); and it is wrapped in a leaf (of the same species as the flower) which represents a blanket. The symbolism is interpreted in terms of the habit of growth. A trunk of plantain or sweet banana flowers and fruits only once, then dies and is pruned away, being replaced by a sucker from the same root, hence the association between the flower and the corpse. *Ilitoki* is a large variety of plantain, eaten when it is green and hard; *injali* is a smallish banana eaten when it is ripe and sweet, and it takes nine months to develop. 'When an *injali* stem forms and a woman conceives a child at the same time, the bananas will be ripe and the woman bear her child together.' No one hesitated about this identification of plantain with male, sweet banana with female; it is as obvious in Nyakyusa as the associations of 'breeches' and 'petticoats' in English.

The officiant sprinkles a powdered medicine on to the earth of the grave and all the participants (that is, the heirs, widows, children, and certain siblings of the deceased) rub themselves in it. They rub forehead, right elbow, right knee, and right toe in the pile of earth. Only chiefs and their close relatives and twins refrain, for they have been drinking medicines, and such close contact with a corpse would 'spoil their medicine': 'The medicine would go rotten if they touched the grave which contains medicine,' so the chief's forehead, etc., must not touch the grave. He merely touches the earth with a finger-tip.

Having touched the earth, all the participants go to wash in a stream, and when they return they wash again ritually in the doorway of the mourning hut, the doctor pouring out medicated water from a small calabash and each participant catching the water in his hands and rubbing them and his mouth and knees with it. Then they oil themselves. Until this ritual they must remain dirty and dishevelled with the mud and ash of mourning on them, and any who steal away to wash are fined by the other relatives.

Next the officiant takes roasted bananas and sticks into each one or more pumpkin-pips (*nyungo*) and one or more lentils (*inandale*).[1] She half-buries these in the earth at the doorway of the hut, or sits in the doorway holding a banana near the ground, and each participant approaches in turn and stoops and bites off the banana, and eats it.

The *ulufemba* (the liner of dry banana leaves on which the

[1] Some also add cowpeas (*indonge*), others oil-seeds (*ngandu*).

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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Selya, Ma Ngonde

mourners eat) is sprinkled with powdered medicine and carried 765 ●
out by the officiant and burnt, or thrown away under the bananas. If the deceased has been buried elsewhere still a bunch of banana leaves representing the *sigfunde* is taken out. 'Until then the rubbish (*imisubi*) is kept in the house and not swept out because they are grieving—a person cannot be clean, it would seem as if he did not grieve.'

Next the officiant takes an old pot and, holding it, circles round the hearth while her assistant drops pumpkin-seeds, beans, lentils and cowpeas into it and the participants sing: 'The croaking bird, the croaking bird (*ilimwamwa*).' The food is transferred to another pot and put on the fire and the officiant touches the hearth with different parts of her body (or makes gestures as if to do so), she and the participants saying as she does so: 'The knee is also put on (the fire), the heel is also put on, the backs of the knees are also put on, the loins are also put on, the belly is also put on, the back of the head is also put on.' Then she stamps noisily on the hearth, and the participants sing: 'It startles him. . . .'

Relatives and village neighbours are expected to bring small [63]
gifts of millet at this ritual and these are formally received by the officiant, who sits outside the mourning hut with two large baskets beside her and acknowledges each gift as it is brought and emptied into one or other of them. The one is for the millet of kinsmen, the other for that of neighbours. She addresses each giver in terms of his or her relationship to the deceased, announcing: 'Your grandchild has brought a measure, your daughter has brought a measure, your fellow (*i.e.* neighbour) has brought a measure, etc. . . .' This is spoken of as 'measuring the measures' (*ukupela imipela*); it is 'to greet the shade', and if millet is not available at the time the ritual is performed it is done symbolically.

A small pellet of bark is scrapped from the species of tree used for
making bark-cloth, hammered a little and placed on a fresh banana leaf and sprinkled with powdered medicine. A grindstone is lifted on to it and the officiant grinds some of the millet just presented and allows it to fall on the bark. During the grinding the officiant says: 'The knee is also ground, the heels are also ground,' and so on, mentioning the belly and loins. From the time of the death until this ritual, hammering of bark-cloth in the home [64]
of the deceased is taboo (*muisile*), for hammering bark-cloth is a [65]
symbol of sexual intercourse and 'the hammer belonged to him [66]
who died'. The first millet ground is made into a paste and later

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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765 smeared on the heads of the participants as a preparation for shaving 'the hair of the corpse' (*inwili ya mfwile*), the rest is made into porridge.

The participants stand in a line in the mourning hut while the officiant sweeps the dust (*imisala*) on to their legs, and they begin to wail and sing the farewell dirge: 'Good-bye, fo-and-so, good-bye. . . .' The other mourners join in the dirge and the women weep. The participants are then told to stand with their legs apart and the officiant pushes a winnowing basket of millet, mixed with a few pumpkin-seeds and lentils,[1] between their legs. She crawls along the ground to do this and then puts the basket on to the head of each participant in turn, and a pinch of the millet flour on each one's shoulder. She takes banana leaves and, after touching her own body in various places with them, she girds them round the waists of the participants. She puts down a stem of bananas[2] and a hen (or a bunch of feathers representing a hen) and each participant in turn sits on them. She holds a banana sapling across the doorway and as each participant passes out of the hut, stooping, he bumps his head against it. Another line is formed in the courtyard and again the basket of millet is put on the head of each participant. Some grains of millet are thrown over them and some sprinkled on the ground. They sing a song, the leader starting: 'The rubbish (*ilinda*) . . .' and the others replying in chorus: 'The rubbish, we were startled at the rubbish (*twayumuka ilinda*)' and they dance the stamping dance for a few minutes.

Then they go off to bathe, taking with them the stem of bananas and the hen and the bark on which the millet was ground. The leaves they wear and the bananas are thrown away in the stream; [illegible] by the officiant as her perquisite. They separate to bathe, the men from the women, the older from the younger.

Returning home, they all run into the mourning hut and out again, one by one, as the officiant pours water, mixed with powdered medicine, on the thatch above the doorway, and the water drops on their bodies. Then each sits down in the doorway and is washed again with water and medicine by the officiant.

A mush of beans and bananas is made, and a few pumpkin-seeds and lentils are mixed in. Some of it is salted, some left unsalted. A little of the unsalted mush is handed to each participant to eat,

[1] Some also add beans. [2] I.e. the whole fruiting head.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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but the salted is mixed in a ball with the millet porridge previously prepared, and plastered against the wall of the hut and on the hearthstones, whence the participants must bite it off. They compete for it, jostling one another. Sometimes the officiant also puts some watery porridge in a leaf of the bark-cloth tree and squeezes it into a basket. Again the participants fight to take a little each. 765

Some of the millet paste, previously prepared, is smeared on the head of each participant in the form of a cross, drawn from the forehead and the nape of the neck to the crown, and from each ear to the crown. The officiant then shaves each of them, beginning with the lines along which she smeared them. As she does so she says: 'Alas, he (or she, if the deceased was a woman) stole. . . . They cut his head.'

If the family is wealthy at least one cow is killed by the heir—Kasitile insisted that a sacrifice is essential at the pumpkin-seed ritual—and the authority of the heir is acknowledged at the same time. Lubalelo, discussing the funeral of his kinsman Mwafyuma, remarked that, at the ritual of the pumpkin-seeds, when they had called together all the dead man's children, his son would kill cows. 'Then when he has killed the cows the children will be told "He is your father", and all of them will fall down before him clapping their hands to say: "Thanks be! Father has risen from the dead (*Ndaga! Ndaga! Afyukile tata*)." '

ii. '*Shaving the sprouting hair.*' The remaining millet brought by relatives and neighbours is usually put to soak immediately and, when it has sprouted, the wives of relatives and village neighbours are called to come and help grind it for beer. The women of the village bring firewood to boil water for the beer and, when the brewing is ripe, 'those whose wives came to grind' come to drink. The participants are given some of the beer mixed with *ukipiki* and a powdered medicine in a small calabash at the grave. Then the officiant smears their faces with soot and draws lines on the head of each with a piece of banana stalk dipped in the lees of the beer to which the *ukipiki* and powdered medicine have been added. Again the lines are drawn from forehead and nape of neck to the crown and from each ear to the crown. She shaves the sprouting [302] hair on the forehead and at the nape of the neck of each of them, and also makes some small cuts in these places and rubs in the lees of the beer. Or she may do this for the senior participant only, who then does it for his juniors. This is 'the shaving of the sprouting hair' (*ukusenula ililemele*) and implies the lifting of a ban. If the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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765 deceased was a man and wealthy, the heir kills a bull or cow for a feast.

765 184 According to one account, 'the heir kills a cow saying: "This is your cow, Father." Then he takes the praying calabash and fills it with beer and goes to the banana grove. The others sit in the courtyard watching from afar. He blows beer and then pours out a little, several times, mentioning the dead man's name and those of three or four prominent dead relatives, and prays for children, health, and food. He takes his own senior son (or the son of his dead brother) with him to see what he does, for he (the son) will do it after his death. Then they come back and the meat is eaten and beer drunk.' But we never saw this happen nor was the prayer in the banana grove mentioned by other informants.

782 765 If the millet put to soak fails to sprout, however, there must be prayer. It is thought that there has been disagreement among the mourners and the shades are angry and have spoilt the millet. The kinsmen gather to confess their quarrels and pray before preparing another batch.

765 At the shaving of the sprouting hair (or some other time during the death ritual) the sisters of the dead man formally admonish his widows on their behaviour as wives. One admonition recorded lasted two hours, and the main theme was the stinginess of the widows in entertaining their sisters-in-law when the latter had come to visit.

765 768 587 On the morning after 'the shaving of the sprouting hair' the participants shave their whole heads and are anointed with ointment by the officiant. In the evening comes the formal handing over of the inheritance, if the deceased was a married man. The heir sits in the doorway of the mourning hut and the senior wife of the deceased hands him a bill-hook, such as is used for pruning bananas. He is adjured by his relatives, his village headman, and his neighbours to care for the children of the deceased as if they were his own, and the widows are told: 'This is your husband who will hoe for you always.' If there is any division of property it is formally made on this occasion, the dead man's sisters and the village headman being primarily responsible for a just allocation. And though, traditionally, women were given no choice about inheritance, this was in fact the occasion on which their protests and preferences were expressed. Then the heir is thrown into the hut with the women he has inherited 'on to the ashes' (*umfuwandolo*), and must have intercourse with all of them that night. One of

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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them knocks on the wall when he has succeeded, and the officiant raises the *ululolo*, the trill of applause and triumph[1] which is also the war-cry, and shakes a basket of seeds by the door shouting: 'Ours, ours, we marvel at the thing!' Until this ritual connection the heir and the widows remain continent, and great importance is attached to the success of the heir in having intercourse with all the widows. Should a widow refuse the heir after touching the ash it is said that she will either die herself or cause any man she lies with to die of 'the ash'; but if she escapes before being smeared with ash then she is safe. The heir is also in danger if a widow should refuse him after he has touched the ash.

The morning after the ritual union the heir is formally summoned out of the hut by a man knocking on the door and crying: 'Come out, war has come (*Soka! ulwite kwinile*),' i.e. sexual intercourse has begun. He sits on a stool in the doorway of the hut and is greeted by the children of the deceased: 'Good morning, Father.'

iii. '*The gaping cough.*' Each of the inherited women goes off to her own father's homestead with the filth (*indafu*) of intercourse on her. She does not even wash her hands, and she takes with her cooked bananas which she has smeared with her husband's semen and her own emission. This she buries in the banana grove in her father's homestead in which he prays to his ancestors. She takes meat to her father if an animal has been killed at the 'shaving of the sprouting hair'. The heir similarly goes to his father's homestead (or that of his father's heir) with cooked bananas to be buried in his father's sacred grove. Each wife drinks beer mixed with medicine with her father and other close relatives. From the time when the heir sleeps with the widows until this ritual is performed, they cannot visit their parents nor can their children do so (though usually children come and go freely in the home of their mother's people) and, more particularly, a widow must not drink from her mother's cup, or eat with her, or sit over her fire, or touch her hand. It is believed that, if the ritual is neglected, those for whom it should have been performed will be seized with a racking cough (*ingotolo*) and diarrhoea. Even Christians, who eschew the other parts of the death ritual, often participate in the *ingotolo*.

When a woman has died she should be replaced by a sister or brother's daughter, just as the dead man is by a brother or son,

[1] The closest equivalent in our society is cheering, but the ululolo is trained by women.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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537 and the widower should refrain from sexual intercourse with his
834 other wives until the ritual union with the 'wife who replaces the dead' (*umuni*) at the 'shaving of the sprouting hair'. Nowadays, however, widowers do not keep this taboo strictly, and many lie with their other wives after the 'picking up of pumpkin-seeds'.

765 Before the 'shaving of the sprouting hair' for a dead woman her brother (or, if he is dead, his heir) goes to cut down the bananas at her former husband's home, as a sign that kinship between them is at an end, but he is persuaded to desist. Mwakweleleja, an elderly man who had just performed it after the death of his sister Seba, the wife of the chief Mwaipopo, in company with his neighbour Mwainelage and his wives, thus described the ritual:

> We arrived and our wives and the wives of Mwaipopo went into the house to wail, and we men went in too and cried: 'Alas father! Alas father!' Then we seized my *umuipase*, the girl Ijonga, the daughter of Seba, and went off with her. The women, the chief's wives, fought with us and cried: 'Bring a cloth, bring a cloth!' They gave us a cloth and we left the girl. Then I seized a hill-hoe[1] and began to cut down the banana grove. I cut indeed! They cried: 'Not the banana grove!' and gave me another cloth.
>
> QUESTION: What does this mean?
>
> MWAKWELELEJA: When we seize the girl it is as if we said: 'My child has died, the kinship is finished, it is finished here, I'll be off with my sister's children (*abipase*), they are *my* children.' And when they give me a cloth they pay saying: 'Father, we pray you, don't! There is still kinship, Father, you are not a stranger! Do not terminate the kinship, it is still there.' And when I cut the banana grove it means the same; it means my child has died here, it is finished here, the kinship has ended. And when *they give me a cloth, they beseech me saying: 'Not the* banana grove, *Father*, the kinship is not yet finished, it still exists!' Formerly, if they were rich they gave a bull. . . . We were unfortunate, Mwaipopo paid us nothing.
>
> *After* I had cut the grove I gave bananas and meat (from a cow I had brought to kill) to all my sisters' children, on the roadway (outside the homestead). I stood with my back to them and handed the bananas and meat over my shoulder. They came up behind me one by one, and took the food in their mouths. [This was demonstrated, dramatically.] Yes, it is a ritual. If we do not give them bananas and meat, their legs swell up, they fall ill and become mad.

765 Some of our informants maintained that this ritual of cutting
184 the bananas was performed only when the deceased's family had no girl to send in her place. Mwakweleleja and Mwainelage, how-

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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ever, insisted that it was performed whether there was a girl to send or not, but if several sisters were married to the same man it was carried out only for the eldest of them. 765 184

We do this whether we are substituting another woman or not, but we do it only for the senior sister. There were three Sobas married to Mwaipopo, and when the two junior ones died we did not go to cut the bananas, but now the senior Soba has died, we do cut the bananas.

Mwaiselage explained that his brother-in-law would come to cut bananas when his senior wife, Lyandileke, died, whether she died before or after her junior sister who is her co-wife, but the brother would not cut bananas at the death of the junior sister. 765

Mwakwelamba: We cut the banana grove again when all the children of those women, the kinswomen married to one man, are dead. That is, their mother's brother's son (anjoni) does it, for their mother's brother will be dead by then. It means the same thing: 'The kinship is finished.' They pay to say: 'No, Father, it still continues.'

A woman to replace the dead is asked for even though her husband has predeceased her. X, describing the ritual added: 537 765

And when my mother dies (if my father has died first) still her relations, my abipwa, come to cut the banana grove. I throw them a cloth crying: 'Not the bananas.' Also they bring me another woman. If they do not, I go to them and say: 'Give me another mother to look after me.' They give me a girl whom I give to a half-brother (as his wife). If there is no girl they give me a cow, saying: 'That's your mother.'

Ibuno and Mwaijamba explained:

If, when a woman has died, her people are poor, having no child to replace her, they say: 'We are sorry, but there is nothing at all here, this cow is for drawing water with.' And formerly they returned all the cattle later on; but now, since we have stopped claiming calves, we divide the cows. . . . But when there is a daughter and they give her to me, the husband, we give marriage cattle again. Kinship does not come to an end. [765]

To recapitulate, the main events of the ritual of death are the formal recognition of the heir (if the deceased was a married man); the burial of a flowering head of bananas and the rubbing in earth from the grave; washing; a ritual eating of bananas with certain seeds; sweeping out the mourning hut; circling the hearth and putting an old pot on the fire with various foods; the presentation of millet by relatives and friends, and a ritual grinding; a second 765 765

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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715 718 washing and the throwing away of a stem of bananas and leaves in a stream, and bringing back a hen and bark-cloth; eating a mash on the hearth; the brewing of beer with the millet presented; a ritual drinking and further shaving when this is ripe; an admonition of the heir on his duties and acknowledgement of him as 'father' by the children of the deceased; sexual intercourse between the heir and the widows he inherits; the burial by each inherited woman of some of the fluids from that intercourse in her father's banana grove, and a ritual drinking of beer with her father and other close relatives.

If the deceased is a woman her brother comes to cut her husband's banana grove and seize her children, as a sign that kinship between the lineages has ceased, but he is dissuaded with gifts, and treats his sister's children with medicines. A sister is sent to replace the dead woman, the widower has intercourse with her at 'the shaving of the sprouting hair', and she returns home to bury some of the fluids in her father's grove, and drink beer with him ritually.

An account of one of the rituals which we attended in Selya which is quoted in the documents (p. 234) may give some reality to this stark outline.

(*b*) *The overt purpose and symbolism*

715 718 828 When asked why the ritual of death is performed the first reply of Nyakyusa informants was that they were driving away (*ukukaga*) the dead and that if it were neglected those for whom it should have been performed would go mad (*ukukaga ukigili*). Angombwike explained: 'In the death ritual they drive away the shade (*umyuka*) saying: "Why are you always at me, nagging at me, in dreams?" It is to swear at him (the shade) and drive him away.'

Another informant explained: 'The touching of the earth is the expression of the wish that he will not come into our dreams and thoughts any more, and he does not!' Another confirmed this saying: 'The powdered medicine and touching the earth are alike; 765 764 they wish to stop him (the deceased) coming into our dreams.' And an Ndali informant said: 'Shaving is to get rid of the shade 775 which was on their bodies.'

There is also the implication of speeding the deceased on his way to the land of the shades, for it is believed that if the ritual is not performed he will not be welcomed by his dead kinsmen and will continue to haunt the living. Of an unfinished death ritual

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people say: '*Tukali ukunkeya unyuka* (We have not yet bidden farewell to the shade),' *ukukeya* being the word used for bidding a courteous farewell to departing guests. Mwaisumo elaborated the point. He said: 'The death ritual is a saying good-bye, it is to see off the dead man accompanying him on his way (*ukunsindikela*); to demonstrate that we have buried him indeed, and to pray that forgetfulness may now come on us.' Another informant explained: 'Touching the earth is to say "Good-bye, friend." '

The danger of madness was given as the reason both for the whole ritual and for many separate actions in it. 'You go mad if you do not shave after a death,' said the wife of the chief Mwaihojo. 'You go mad if you keep the hair of the corpse (*inzili ya mfimba*),' said Mwandisi, the old blind historian, and he went on: 'Yes, much madness comes from the shades if you have neglected the death ritual for a wife or for parents, and the ritual at puberty also. Madness comes from the shades and from Kyala. And if a woman refuses to perform the ritual for her husband who has died, and refuses to lie down with the heir, she also goes mad.' If someone does go mad the cause is usually said to be neglect of the death ritual or some mistake in its performance.

Other types of illness are also attributed to neglect of the death ritual. Kasitile was ailing and thought that his illness was due partly to the fact that he had not completed the death ritual for a relative. Mwilabe said of the sweeping in the ritual: 'They sweep round their legs lest their bodies become swollen and sick. It is said that their bodies will swell if they attend the ritual of someone else and this is done and they themselves have not been swept over.' Several informants mentioned 'a lingering and painful death' (a terror often spoken of by the Nyakyusa) as the penalty for neglecting a ritual, and the last part of the ritual is expressly interpreted as a prophylactic against the 'gasping cough'.

Finally, it is said that the crops will not flourish if the ritual is neglected. Kakuju, a village headman of Selya, was explicit on the point: 'If you do not bury your father properly the food will disappear. They (the diviners) will tell you to find something and when beer has been left overnight outside in the banana grove you pray to the shade.' The fear that the crops will not flourish is not mentioned so frequently as the danger of madness, but it is a general notion.

The danger of madness or other illness coming on one is thought to be greatest if a man tastes the ritual food or beer, or is sprinkled

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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764 by the dust, at some other funeral without having completed the
765 ritual for his own parents, and the danger of the 'gasping cough'
828 exists only when a widow, having lain with the heir, eats or drinks with her own relatives.

796 Everyone knows the connection between madness and the performance of the whole ritual and between coughing and the final act, but not everyone is conscious of the symbolism of the various events. For example, Mwakisisile, a middle-aged pagan man whom we knew well, could not interpret the details of the symbolism and he explained: 'Some ask about these things in the ritual, some do not ask. I have not asked. We only know, many of us, that in the ritual we drive the shade, who is here, away from the body, and that if we do not drive him away we run mad. But we do not understand the details of the ritual such as straining water through a leaf, or passing the baskets between the legs, so as to be able to say: "This detail means this." ' Those most conscious of the symbolism are the *abanyago*, the officiants at the family rituals and the priests of the communal rituals. Kasitile, the hereditary rain-maker of Selya, who was a close friend of Godfrey Wilson's, and formally presented him to his dead ancestors urging them 'not to be startled at a white face', was our foremost authority on the symbolism of the Selya ritual. He was more conscious of the symbolism than most people, but his interpretation was confirmed at almost every point by others. Kasitile was not paid for [124] information—none of our informants was—but he and Godfrey Wilson exchanged gifts from time to time in the manner customary among the Nyakyusa, and he often had a meal with us. Mwandini, a very old blind chief living on the Lake-shore plain (MuNgonde) who was regarded by the Nyakyusa themselves as an authority on history and custom, was also a friend prepared to expound the [184] rituals. His interpretation contradicted Kasitile's on one point only—he denied that one purpose of the ritual was to bring back the shade into the house. Other informants, though less coherent, corroborated Kasitile's interpretation, which may therefore be taken as a general, not a personal one.

764 There are nine main themes in the ritual: first, the driving away
765 of the dead from the dreams of his close kinsmen, and measures to
796 prevent him 'brooding over them' (*ukukotela*)—the word is that used of a hen brooding over her chickens. Widows, in particular, must be separated from the shade of their husband before the heir (or any other man) dare have intercourse with them. Secondly, the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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identification of the mourners with the corpse and the separation of the shade from both of them. 'What they do to the participants they do to the deceased. . . . If they are not cleansed he is still muddy. . . . We throw away the corpse, the contamination of death, into the river . . . we drive the shade away off our bodies to join his fellows . . . we separate the corpse and the shade.' Thirdly, bringing back the shade as a beneficent spirit into the home. 'In the ritual we tell the shade to go away and join his fellows, and then to come back with them and warm himself by the fire in our house. . . . At first the shade is in our bodies, we cast him out . . . at first it is as if we were still holding the corpse in our arms, but we throw the corpse away into the river . . . the shade we bring back into our house.'

Fourthly, a miming of the actions of a madman in eating excrement as a prophylactic against behaviour of that sort. The dead, if not separated from the living, bring madness upon them, and simulating madness is a protection against it.

Fifthly, the corpse and faeces are identified: 'The corpse is filth, it is excrement. And so when a madman for whom they have not performed the ritual eats filth that is the corpse, he is still holding it, they have not done the ritual for him.'

Sixthly, the shades are identified with semen and seeds and their control over potency and fertility is recognized. The Nyakyusa think that they are always present in sexual intercourse, and symbols of sexual intercourse are interpreted as a means of driving out the shade from the participants' bodies.

Seventhly, 'the food which he hoed' is symbolically 'given to the shade' of the man who has just died and he is urged to be satisfied: 'You, shade, do not think there was little food at your ritual. . . . The food which we have eaten you have eaten . . . do not create hunger.'

Eighthly, the shade is acknowledged as a kinsman by eating with him food and beer mixed with *ihipili*—the symbol of agnatic kinship—before he is driven away.

Lastly, a dead man is formally replaced by his heir, a woman by her sister or her brother's daughter.

These conceptions are expressed in the following texts which are given as they were recorded by Godfrey Wilson. No attempt has been made to systematize Kasitile's or Mwandisi's arguments, but the statements made during numerous sessions have been placed in sequence, and are separated only by dots.

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764 765 775 i. *Kasitile's interpretation.* (Recorded by G. W. in Nyakyusa and translated by him shortly afterwards.)[1]

KASITILE: We go to bathe wearing leaves, we throw them away, we bathe, then we come back and shave our hair. This means we are driving away the shade (*mpyuka*), for at first he is in our bodies. Our fathers told us: 'When I die I shall not reach the place of the shades unless you do the ritual for me; those who preceded me will drive me back saying: "You are not one of us, you cannot come, they have not yet done your ritual." For the shades linger on the way at first, they do not reach their place.' We do the ritual so as to tell the shade: 'We have given you everything, now go away and may your fellow shades receive you, do not come here.'

764 765 828 When we return from bathing we put a banana in the ground with a pumpkin-seed and a lentil in it. We stoop and bite a piece off, and then we shave the hair. There is much idiocy (*ubulema*) if you do not perform the ritual, and madness (*ikigili*), or perhaps you will have a lingering death. The shade is in the body, he causes madness (*ikigili*), he says: 'Why have you not done the ritual?' The shades pound and stamp the body.

Mwambuputa (a village headman) joining in the conversation said:

775 764 All this round us [with a sweeping gesture] is the place of the shades. What we have buried is only the body, to prevent it stinking, but the heart (*indumbula*) stays here.

764 765 828 KASITILE: The banana which we bite in the ground is like the sausages of porridge of the Kukwe, it is excrement, it is filth; because I think that if I do not perform the ritual I may run mad and eat filth. Also before this they beat up a mash of cowpeas, they take it with a spoon and put it against the wall, and one by one we come and eat. This also is eating filth so that we may escape and be clean.

[177] Madness (*ikigili*)[2] is of two kinds, one comes from Kyala (but we used to say from Mbasi, we did not say Kyala) and one from ritual. Mwaipopo (the chief) had the madness (*ikigili*); it is in his family on his mother's side. This is the madness of Mbasi, they do their rituals all right. Mbasi is he who lived with my father here. He called 'Kanjuki! Kanjuki!' from the hillside; then my mother would cook him some food and my father would put something out for him.[3] When we perform the rituals the shades are very pleased to see it; of old you might hear them clapping their hands in the evening here, after we had finished a ritual. But they have gone away now. . . . Yes, the shades are filthy

764 765 775 826

[1] I have made minor changes in the translation.

[2] Distinguished from a trance or epileptic fit, *ukukoma ensalaga*.

[3] See *Communal Rituals among the Nyakyusa* (in preparation).

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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(*kwiyali*), they are in the body at first, they shake it and you fall ill; they say: 'You are still muddy, you have not done the ritual.' . . . When a man dies his heart (*indumbulo*) and his body (*umfimbo*) separate, they are divorced, the heart with the blood (*ililopa*) and the shadow (*ilingungulo*) are separated from the corpse which rots in the ground. The corpse is filth, it is excrement. And so when a madman, for whom they have not performed the ritual, eats filth, that is the corpse, he is still holding it, they have not done the ritual for him. If they have not done the ritual for the shade his fellows drive him back and say: 'You cannot come yet, you are still muddy, they have not bathe you in the river.' . . .

Yes, that which they do to my body, to me the heir (or the relative) they do to the shade himself. He, the corpse, is earthy, muddy. That is why we smear ourselves with mud, we mourners; it is this earth that we drive away in the ritual, it is mud, it is the corpse. . . .

The hair of the mourners which we shave in the ritual is one with the hair of the corpse, it is his. We wash and shave and anoint him and he goes to his own place. . . .

First we bite the bananas with the seeds stuck into it in the ground, and then we eat bananas and seeds in the usual way. It is the food which he, the shade, ate. . . .

They seize the heir and widows at the pumpkin-seed ritual. The officiant is there, she smears ashes on their chests and puts a strand of *ilingisingafwa* creeper on their necks; then if the woman refuses the man later there is a case and she must pay the fine for adultery. If she refuses before this there is no case, and she does not pay. The ashes and creeper are signs of death, of mourning, of the corpse—they cast them away into the river.

QUESTION: The rubbing in earth—what does it represent?

KAETTLE: The banana flower is the corpse. We are saying to him: 'You corpse, we have finished with you, do not come here again, it is finished for ever, do not look towards us, go away.' This earth is the same as the mud with which we smear ourselves at the burial. We bathe, we cast it away.

QUESTION: The washing at the door with medicine?

KAETTLE: We wash with powdered medicine at the door because we are just going to take filth (*indafu*) in our hands—to take the bananas and pumpkin-seeds. We bathe, we wash, and then they give us the bananas. It is taboo (*mwiko*) to eat before washing. The calabash used for this washing is hung up in the porch and used for the beer later, the beer which they drink on the path after anointing themselves.

QUESTION: The bananas and lentils and pumpkin-seeds?

KAETTLE: At the eating of bananas and pumpkin-seeds we do not separate them, everything is then pressed together in one place; but the banana flower we bury is separate, that is the corpse. And at the

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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water when we bathe we make a separation—they take a stem of bananas, and a bark-cloth, and a hen to the water. The bananas they throw away—that is the corpse; the hen and the bark-cloth they bring back to the homestead and the officiant takes them home with her—that is the shade, is not the shade in the house with us? Do we not pray to him?

QUESTION: Putting food into the pot?

KASITULE: This food is the filth of the body. We say: 'We cast you from us, let our hearts be purified; the mud we smeared on our faces we cast it away, all our body casts you away. We are not corpses; we are putting you to rights and shaving your hair, go away to your fellows.' We begin to get rid of the earth we had on our faces so that we may anoint ourselves again. In our lineage we eat only bean mush, not bananas and millet porridge, we differ in our rituals.

QUESTION: The sweeping of rubbish on to legs and the weeping?

KASITULE: This means: 'We begin to cast you off wholly, let all the ritual that is left come to us, we throw it away.' The measures of millet are to tell the shade that So-and-so has brought millet and is doing his ritual. 'Do not think he is angry with you,' we tell him, 'he has brought this millet.' The throwing of millet from the winnowing basket on to the participants' heads as they stand in a line outside means that we cast him away, we are taking him to the river—at the river we throw away the corpse. They throw away the leaves and the stem of bananas.

QUESTION: Hitting the heads with a banana sapling in the doorway?

KASITULE: They hit the participants on the head, that is the *ndeshe disease of the dead man,*[1] *we are* setting them to rights.

QUESTION: The stem of bananas, hen, and bark-cloth?

KASITULE: The stem of bananas is the corpse, they leave it in the water with the leaves; the bark-cloth and hen are the shade which they bring into the house.

QUESTION: The circling with the pot and putting in of food?

KASITULE: This is the shade whom they bring into the house (*ishimbele*) when they have brought him from the water. The banana flower they bury is the same as the leaf they wear, it is the corpse which they throw away in the water.

Yes, we separate the corpse and the shade with all our might, the earth we rub our bodies in is the corpse, we throw it into the water and the shade we bring back to the house. The eating of the bean mush on [17] the wall (the old custom) and on the hearth (both old and contemporary) that is the shade in the house. He warms himself by the fire in the house, we pray to him. Putting food into the pot means: 'Leave our

[1] Not clear to me.—M. W.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17

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bodies altogether, go away to your friends, sit here by the hearth and warm yourself.'

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QUESTION: The grinding of millet flour on to back and the subsequent anointing of the participants with this flour in a paste, before shaving?

KAMTULE: This means: 'This is your food that you ate, we give it to you.' And the smearing on the hair means: 'We have finished your ritual for you, we have left nothing out, bear us no grudge.'

QUESTION: The sweeping of rubbish (*imindu*) on to the participants' legs?

KAMTULE: The rubbish is the rubbish of death, it is dirt. 'Let it come now,' we say. 'Let it not come later, may we never run mad.' The wailing (during sweeping) means: 'Go away, farewell!' We have finished the burial now, it will never be done again save once more at the best.

QUESTION: The basket of millet between legs and over heads?

KAMTULE: That is to drive him away, to tell him: 'Do not return to these your relatives here, you were in their bodies, now you are separate, we have driven you away, you are no relative of ours!' All that we do in the house there means that he is in our bodies and we are going to cast him out. The flour on the shoulder is like the flour paste in the hair, this is the corpse, we throw it away.

QUESTION: The song 'We are startled by the shade' (*Twapumwile ilinde*)?

KAMTULE: The *ilinde* is the shade, we are startled.

QUESTION: How startled?

KAMTULE: Ha! Are you not startled when you run mad?[1] The heart is terribly startled, it curls upwards; when they say this phrase: 'We *are startled by the ilinde*' they quiet the heart and make it lie down again. Let him go away and be startled with his fellows!

QUESTION: The word *ilimumuse* (the croaking bird)?

KAMTULE: That is the shade that hounds on the body. 'Friend,' we say to him, 'we have put you to rights, do not come to us, oh croaking bird.'

QUESTION: The ritual as a whole?

KAMTULE: It means: 'We have given you everything, we have eaten filth on the hearth'—*for if one runs mad one eats filth, forem. . . .*

QUESTION: What is the symbolism of pouring water on the thresh and running through the drops?

KAMTULE: The ritual has many parts. We touch a person that he should do it properly and not leave out anything. Do we not fear (*shutile*) the water for washing, the water of the corpse? When heavy rain falls do we not flee from the downpour and enter the house? That is how it is done. We mimic what he did when he was alive. . . .

[1] *Ilinde* is used also for an epileptic fit.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F7617 Ngonde F7617
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again an acknowledgment of kinship. 'If she washed outside it would mean that she was not the daughter of her father.'

The two fresh leaves of plantain and sweet banana on which the officiant places her soiled bark-cloth, and on top of which she kneels to eat bananas are, as already stated, symbols of male and female. Everyone understood this. Fewer people were aware of the symbolism of eating the banana, but Kasitile and one or two others were fully conscious of it and forthright in discussion. He said:

> At the 'putting her in' (*ukuingwila*) the mothers-in-law bring a new bark-cloth and dress her in it; the old one is thrown away on the litter. They mix together bananas and *ifipiki* medicine which the receives. Don't you understand? They treat her. The plantain is the symbol of the man, of his penis, we are treating her, may she 'cook well' for her husband [i.e. be proficient in intercourse], may she bear children. She eats on that bark-cloth which means may the blood go to make children, this is your husband. Eating is a symbol (*ilimanyilo*) of sexual intercourse. She eats the plantain, meaning she has intercourse with her husband.

He connected this with the admonition at the end of the ritual. When she eats the banana nothing is said, it is only implied, but at the drinking of beer they teach her, saying: "Look after your husband well; if you are sweeping the house and he catches hold of you don't be startled, accept him, and catch hold of him also. . . . Men whom they do this beget children." '

The second washing at the groom's, which is performed for every wife and not only for a senior one, is interpreted as a cleansing ritual. In the morning the officiate calls the husband and wife and says: 'Come and wash now and clean off the filth.'

Shaving is both a purification and a sign of the completion of the ritual. 'The hair of a girl who has reached puberty is the filthiness of puberty, of the menstrual blood which she produces then. She throws it away.' Mwakwelebeja and his wife said: 'The shaving is to show that she has awakened to puberty (*ukwakula ukuunga*). During the ritual she did not shave. We perform the rite of shaving that she may begin to shave again, and to let her smear herself with brown ointment. It is like a burial. If a man's close relative dies he does not shave or wash.' Mwalilenje said: 'The shaving is to show that the *ukuunga* ritual is finished.'

Cleaning the liver which is 'filthy', contaminated with the menstrual blood of the girl, is also a symbol of purification. The washing in a leaf basin into which *ifipiki* medicine had been

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 F7617 Ngonde F7617
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The officiant prepared some beer mixing it with powdered medicine, and they came one by one to drink. The other officiant made as if to shave them, taking a little hair from the forehead and the neck. When she had done this she put her hands between her legs. Thus the people of Selya perform the ritual. In another calabash they put the lees of the beer that had been drunk, with two pots of water. These lees are poured on to their heads and the water runs over their bodies. When the officiant has done this she puts her hands and the calabash between her legs. They look towards Sanga country. Then they shave their hair. When they have finished they throw away the cloths and bark-cloth which they wear when they wash. Then they anoint themselves with oil, and sleep with it on them, and wash in the morning. The people of Selya shave in the morning; at this time they do not really shave, they only cut the sprouting hair.

In the morning there is the ceremony of handing over the inheritance. The heir sits on a banana stump in the doorway and the *chief* with hands him a billhook. Then they say: 'Care for these children whom your elder brother left us if you had begotten them yourself, do not be hard, be kindly as he was.'

And at night he will sleep with the widows. In the morning the *chief* will goes to her father without washing off the filth and gives her fathers beer, then they greet one another. Ndingonsio also goes to his mother's people. They said one women did not go because her fathers did not know the customs, they are Lugulu. There were only these two women, one grown up and one a girl, to be inherited.

Mwaijumbo told me that for Kanyosa their affines will not cut the banana grove for they have no girl to give in her place. 'They will give us cattle, we divide (the marriage-cattle) with them.'

(3) *Nkali funeral rites* *Record of Mwalimanda*

When someone has died the Nkali mourn for five days, and the sixth day they sweep and shave the hair. When they are shaving is they take a pendanwi and put in it all the hair that is shaved off. When they have finished they choose one senior woman, the *chief* wife, and they hand her the hair and they go to throw it away at the cross-roads. Giving the women the hair means that the shade should be at his place and leave others. Shaving is to get rid of the shade which was on their bodies (*akusuwa ku lumanya anyake apa kali angaw mu mbili*). And the people who held the corpse in their arms and dug the grave step over a swarth of fire where they have come from the burning. The doctor gives them medicines to bathe with. They say that if they do not step over fire it is as if they had the dead on their bodies (*kulinganis mandili anyfue*), and he will always come in dreams, so they drive him away.

When some considerable time has passed—a whole year—they do the *Ijangalo*. This word comes from straining beer. To strain the *Ijangalo*

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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765 they seek two or three officiants, and they build a temporary hut behind the living huts where they strain three pots of beer, which they call 'the beer of the shades'. Those officiants do not bathe their bodies because they say: 'Let us be with the shade when we make the beer (*ajaga nagwe angaba ku tulakomba shimilaw*).' The rest of the beer is strained in the house.

When they have brewed it they take one potful from the temporary hut and pour the contents on top of the grave; then they dig a hole on the grave and place in it a little pot of beer. What is left in these two pots they drink, together with the rest of the beer, and there is much drumming.

766 After a long time has passed, perhaps two years, if there has been sickness in the home, they think that the deceased is making them giddy, is causing them to be ill. So they dig up the corpse and take all the bones and finger and toe nails. If one is left the sickness is not cured. When Mulape, the grandchild of Mwakafonga, was ill they dug up the corpse and the illness ceased very quickly. They pile up the bones which have been dug up.

III. MARRIAGE NEGOTIATIONS AND GIFTS

769 ANSWERER: One of our comrades in Kabembe heard that there was an unmarried girl at the Chief Mwaaumbwe's, so one Monday he said to three of us: 'Don't go away, friends, we are going to woo the chief's daughter at Mwaaumbwe's.' So we put on our best clothes, those we wear to church, and we went to the home of the father of the girl. He was the younger brother of the Chief Mwaaumbwe by the same mother, and he told us: 'I am not the father (*apaise*). She is my own child, but the father is the chief. Go to him' [i.e. authority over his daughter rested with his elder brother]. The girl had reached puberty. Someone else had married her, but her father had received only one cow, so the elder brother, the chief, was angry and took away the girl from her husband. My friend had never met her, never. He had just heard that there was an unmarried girl at that place, because the custom of making love to girls in the long grass is not a traditional one: a girl used to stay at her father's house. A young man went to the father before he spoke with the girl; he never spoke to her in secret. Then the father would send the girl to speak with the young man. She came and sat down and the young man looked at her closely and his friends who accompanied him helped him. Formerly a young man did not wear many clothes, he only wore one cloth in front, and a brass body-ring, so that his whole belly might be seen, and she might look closely. Also he sits high on a stool, while his fellows sit on the ground, that he may be seen by the girl.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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refuses point blank to feed his visitors, he appeals to another; but it will be obvious that continued churlishness on the part of a wife would lead to trouble. Bananas, rice, and malesi belong to the husband; bananas, because he alone attends to them; rice, because it came from the Europeans; and malesi, because from this cereal beer is made, and the husband is lord of the beer pot once the beer is brewed. Fowls belong to the wife, but though the profits of sale are hers, she usually lays them out in small household necessities, such as salt. She often gets a cow from her father, and her husband may make her a similar gift; and he must not use the milk without her consent, though if it is sold, the money is laid by to pay the tax. All household utensils are hers, except the small dish from which her husband eats; but she leaves everything behind should she be divorced, except the cow she received from her father.

If a wife dies while still capable of child-bearing, her father must give another daughter to the widower; or, if he has none, a cow, dressed with flowers, is sent with an apology, and a promise that as soon as possible the dowry cattle will be returned. If the father hopes that another daughter may yet be born to him, an arrangement may be come to by which she will go to the widower. Widows become the "family" of the heir. They wear anklets of cow-skin, and let their hair grow, mixing it with clay. These signs of mourning they wear for about a year. Girls wear similar tokens of mourning if either parent is dead, but not boys.

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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CHAPTER XXIV

Death & Burial

761 AMONG the Konde, as among other Bantu peoples, no man dies "unwept, unhonoured, or unsung." However contemptible he may have been in life, he has now passed to a sphere in which he is clothed with fresh powers, which, for good or ill, he can direct upon his living descendants, who take care to give no cause of offence. He cannot, however, punish them for any evil they may have done him while alive; only *post mortem* sins can be visited upon them: neglect of ceremonies, refusal of beer at the funeral, omission of his name when prayer is made, and other tokens of forgetfulness. And the power for harm of each spirit is limited to his own descendants; but chiefs, naturally, can bring misfortune upon the whole of the community over which they ruled in life.

763 Immediately a man has died, his eldest child, son
765 or daughter, unless an infant, begins the mourning.

"Alas, my father, I too have met trouble!" Then the women, "Ah! trouble comes to you as to others." Next the leader, "My father, my lion, my leopard," naming all the strong and fierce animals to which the dead man is compared; the women say, "Now indeed you are poor"; and the boy replies, "Yes, my

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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mothers, my strength is gone, my hope is broken. 763
How poor am I among men!" If he is a boy he is 765
now taken by a kindly relative and put outside, and told not to weep like a woman. During all this time, and perhaps for three days to come, the drum is beating; a slow tum tum at first, but rising later to a more furious noise, which goes on night and day until the mourning is over.

The women now take up the tale, and one goes 765
over all the virtues of the dead, a long wail from the others following upon each statement. Day by day this goes on, as new parties come to the mourning. The women smear their bodies and their faces with clay, and wear bands of banana fibre or of palm leaf on ankles, wrists, and forehead. The men, at the death of an important person, carry spear and shield.

In the meantime some relatives have gone to dig 764
the grave, and others are dressing the dead man for burial. The body is washed, a man's body by men, and woman's by women, and dressed in *mawete* (body rings), anklets, wristlets, and finally swathed in as much cloth as his relatives can afford to buy, only the eyes being left uncovered. Before the dressing, however, the body is oiled, and if the dead man was a warrior, his *isembanjani* (feather head-dress) is placed on his head.

The women now take up the body, and carry it 763
through the village, wailing as they go. Having shown the dead man for the last time around the familiar haunts of his life, they lay him down near the grave, where mats are spread to receive him. Now the *poa*

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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Various Movements of the Death Dance.

The performers advance at a run in a double line, then retire, moving apart, or slide, shooting and singing, while the drums beat out their prolonged roll.

[facing p. 296]

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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766 medicine placed in the empty grave, which attracts the lizard into which the soul of the dead man has entered. It is thus caught and burned in the grave. The parents or near relatives drink medicine, and the body is carried off by the doctor to be burned in the bush. Among the Bandali, all bodies are dug up after the flesh has rotted away, and the bones are taken into the forest, where they are placed in a sitting position against a tree and left there. A much more gruesome custom, which prevails among the Bandali, is that of keeping the bones on the verandah of the heir's house, done up in banana leaves, which are renewed as required, the bones being occasionally anointed with oil. Here and there throughout Konde-land are places called *Itaga*, so named from the verb *kutaga*, to cast away. In the long past, when a man was dying, and all hope of recovery had been abandoned, he was carried to the *Itaga*, placed in a sitting position, and left to die. After death the flesh was devoured by birds or beasts. Nowhere, so far as I have discovered, is this repulsive practice now followed.

•765 536 The death dance begins as soon as the first wailing is over, and continues as long as people continue coming in to mourn. The men carry spears or sticks, if the dead man was of any importance; the women have leaves or tails. When the dance has fully developed, the men form one line, and the women another, facing them. The two lines approach each other, the men raising their spears and shields, the women waving the leaves or tails; at about a yard apart they retire again, shouting or singing as the drum

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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765 beats out its monotonous noise. In the meantime
535 there may be uncontrolled persons running about, leaping, waving spears, not seldom casting a taunt, which is quickly taken up, and spears are thrown, and wounds, and even death, may be the result.

765 Sometimes the wailing takes place in the house, or
152 in the open, just outside. It is interesting to watch men and women approach the place of mourning: they come with all appearance of *sang-froid*, but suddenly emotion grips them, and they take up the wail with streaming tears. It does not occur to anyone that he should restrain himself; it was not for that that he came. Yet the recovery from this high-pitched emotion is just as rapid. There is a sudden hush, some one addresses to the widow the old, world-old, world-wide comfort that all must die; and, amazing to relate, this is often received with laughter, not mocking laughter, but laughter intended to relieve the strain which all are feeling. Sometimes too, jesting, and even obscene language, are indulged in, with the same end in view. And as emotion rises
765 again, and this especially among the dancers, free rein
137 is given to looseness of language and gesture, and more definite evil follows in the darkness.

It is affirmed that all this looseness has arisen since the coming of the white man; but statements of the harm done by the latter are so common among the Konde and other tribes, that one may well be sceptical. The explanation given is that European government will not permit the old death penalty for adultery, and therefore it has become more common; or that

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
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•765 the number of cattle has increased so greatly since
837 European administration commenced, that there are many who can pay the fine imposed; or again, that since civilized government will not permit the fighting that used to take place, the emotion generated has to find other outlets.

765 As parties from a distance come to the mourning, they go first to the "owner" of the dead, and offer their sympathies. In return they are given a long account of the progress of the disease, and of the measures that were taken by relatives to prevent death. A man approaching a widow, will sit at a distance of about a yard to offer his condolences, but a woman throws her arms around the neck of the bereaved.

762 The Konde do not attach the same value to life as we do, and suicide is not uncommon. I have known of suicide due to small money troubles, loss of a law-suit, continued poverty, prolonged illness, leprosy, quarrels at home, and finally to disappointment in love; this last, I am told, only on the part of the man; a woman disappointed in love does not commit suicide. For people who die by their own act, there is less mourning than for an ordinary death, and the parting words at the graveside are not the same; "since it was by your own desire that you went." The spirits require an explanation from every one who comes to them in this way; but any answer seems to satisfy them. Ordinarily the new-comers are received with the words, "Come and rest." This information comes from persons who "died" and returned, though a more common belief is that the dead do not return.

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
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Lepers are now buried like ordinary persons. But in the not very distant past, they were placed in a sitting position against a tree, and so left to be devoured. No one of those who carried the body looked behind, lest he also should be "caught" by the disease. 766

About a month after the funeral, the beer feast takes place. A small quantity is taken to the grave, and the dead man is addressed, and bidden again to go to his ancestors. "Take this beer as an offering to them. The ox that we have killed is also for them." The day is given up to eating and drinking, with intervals of wailing, the men in the open, the women in the house of the heir, or near relative of the dead man. 765

The ceremonies for women and children are similar to those described. A small chief, near Karonga, who was utterly neglectful of his mother during her life, impoverished himself in the splendour of her funeral. The grave was completely lined with expensive cloths, and the body was decked out as it never had been in life. The man's grief was genuine; or if it was not grief, it was fear of what the old lady, with her renewed powers, might do, if he did not attend to her now that she was dead. 764

When the mourning is over, all the friends of the dead man shave their heads. Omission of this ceremony involves the careless one in a quarrel with the departed. 765 302

Here and there throughout the country ancient customs survive which have been dropped by the majority of the people. In many places the entrance of the heir upon his new position is accompanied by 768

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Nyakakwa [the grandfather] ran off with them to Mwaluje in the hills, where he died so that they disappeared and were never returned to his fellow-guinea. Therefore they bury the relics by the ancestral tree, at his old homestead, but someone ran off with them again. . . . The hair and nails of the chief are buried there, the earth of the chief will always be heavy. All this is very secret. . . .

Mwandisi (115, the old blind chief) told us that

When a chief dies they take his nails and hair and put them in the house of his wife who buries them with medicine for fertility of the soil (ifupe), then at the time of planting the village headmen come and take that medicine to plant the food with. This was done on the death of the chief Mwakalukwa (141) and the chief Mwakalinga (142) and others for, it is said, the chief goes off with our fertility (imbuto yetu).

Thus, though our informants differed slightly about the details, they were agreed that the power of growth lies in the nails and hair of a chief, and these must be taken from him while he is yet alive, and later used to fertilize the earth.

The burial of a chief's son with a live black calf we saw for ourselves, and the wailing was delayed until after the burial. A distinctive funeral of this sort is accorded to all the sons of a ruling chief and his senior daughter, but not (we were told) to more distant kinsmen. The other mark of a royal funeral is the slaughter of many head of cattle to accompany the deceased and to feed the mourners. At the death of the chief Mwakipesile (95) over 500 head were killed, and Mwaipopo (118) killed thirty head at the funeral of his mother. Since a chief has many wives and daughters he has many affines all of whom must bring cows to kill, and he also has a large herd himself on which to draw. To fail to feed his people at a funeral is to fail as a chief. The whole country mourns for two or three weeks, no one going to work in the fields, or occupying themselves with ordinary business. All smear themselves with mud, as if they were kinsmen, and even the men bind their bellies tightly with mourning bells 'that they may not rumble'. [745] •

(d) THE CHIEF AND THE 'BREATH OF MEN'

Profitshown, the power of growth (imbuto), lies in the chief's body and the village headmen have no share in it; they only tend it, taking care that it does not disappear with the dead. But the headmen share with the chief and the priests the duty of 'watching

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787 753 clearly inclined to the shades as it had before the divination, but as before the certain conviction was lacking.

Four days later (10/6/35) Kasitile went to Nkwa in Kitali village to consult the oracle again 'for that of Nzoki went wrong'. He told us afterwards 'This oracle supported the finding of Nkambwe's. It said: [775] [749] Your kinsman who is dead is angry; he says, "Why did you not celebrate the ritual? I am tired of the hair (*Ngatale nanje imuli*). And what did you offer your father after cutting that tree?" ' Here yet another cause of Kasitile's illness is suggested—the neglect of the death ritual of a kinsman. The implication is that the chief mourners have not yet performed the concluding rite of shaving which makes it possible for the deceased to join his fathers. The hair which the mourners shave off is called 'the hair of the corpse'.

[765] [803]

Quarrow: What are you going to do then?

Kasitile: I shall charge the young man, son of my dead kinsman, with neglect, and tell him to celebrate the ritual that the shades which have bound me may go out of my body.

[805] [802]

Quarrow: And the bull?

Kasitile: If I can find one I shall kill it.

Quarrow: Who will be there?

[799] Kasitile: The priests will be there, Ngulye, Kinegwa, Njelukwa, Mwalubwa and Mwakambule,[1] and also Mwaipopo (*sic*) himself. Were I a commoner I should kill alone with my younger brothers, but since I am a public personage (*ali ukulanda*) the village headmen are there. (To Mwakambule, the cloth.) It is good at your home in the hills; here things are bad.

Quarrow: But they also have shades?

[775] [778] Kasitile: But they are not important. Look you, I just cut a tree and they have seized me and dwell in my body. Are there sacred groves in the hills? Do men visit them? There in the hills rituals have died; the puberty ritual and the rituals of the groves are celebrated very little.

On 27th March Kasitile looked in to say that he was going to consult a visiting Sanga doctor 'from very far off' about his cough, but G.M. had better not come but his presence spoil the divination. Kasitile came again after the consultation, full of excitement. 'What a doctor! That is a doctor indeed! That is a diviner! He took an ear and divined with it; he took coppers which I brought and threw them in a little pot, together with the ear, and ash, and he said: "You also take ash and throw it in" and I did so. Then he looked into the little pot and said: "You built on the plain!" He knew this without being told! I said: "Yes".'

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Scene: There was a quarrel then.

[1] The last two are priests of Mbwanga (*vide* p. 84) who did not in fact come. Mwakambule, Kasitile's nephew, who did come is not mentioned.

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against the wrong-doer. It is supposed that after this procedure sickness or even death may come to that person. Another method consists of laying a bewitched object on the path usually used by the offender; with the same result. Such bewitching is practised, for instance, when a quarrel has broken out between relatives. With the Nyakyusa any quarrelling with kinsmen is considered a very serious crime, as such a conduct is apt, in their estimation, to destroy the highly-valued family harmony.

3. *Another day a ceremony (ukwingapi)*[1] to end mourning was held at Katumba. Some time before an elder child had died, and now they were gathered to take leave of the dead[2].

At some distance from the hut, on the open space before it, a square represented the grave, in which the kinsmen of a banana[3] was interred, representing the dead. The mourners knelt at this grave and touched it with their elbows, knees and foreheads[4]. Each of the chief mourners had to do this, according to the belief of the Natives, lest he should fall into madness.

The next act was performed by the *unyanga*[5], the leading person of the ceremony, one in full knowledge of the rites. Immediately before the door of the hut of the mourning parents, the *unyanga* threw the collections of corn, brought by the participants in small baskets in honour of the dead, together into a big basket, and uttered the names of the contributors addressing the dead. The other participants repeated these names.

Then the mourners went into the hut; but, after some moments, they reappeared one by one and each one, as he left the door in a crouching position, was softly struck on his neck by the *unyanga* with a piece of the trunk of a banana plant. It was explained to me that this ceremony would induce new strength to the mourners, who were enfeebled by the death of their relative.

The portion of the ceremony which followed, consisted in the forming of a line by the mourners between the hut and the grave. The parents now stood straddle-legged on leaves of banana, the *unyanga* at the

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[1] Cf. Wilson, Ceremonies of Burial, p. 8, n. 4: *unyanga*.

[2] Wilson has described burials (*ifyeo, ng.*) of adult persons; nevertheless, I think, my description will be of some value.

[3] Cf. my Chaga Notes, Baessler Studien, XV, p. 366.

[4] Cf. Pöllabauer, p. 288.

[5] Cf. Mackenzie, p. 280; pl. *tangapa*, p. 51; Wilson, Introduction, p. 287, *unyanga* (hereditary priests).

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head of the line. She was also the first who crawled between the legs of the others, facing the hut, and followed by the others. This ceremony has the same purpose as the preceding act.

Scene from the chungu-ceremony: The mourners returning from the grave to the house crawling through the legs of the others.

Then the hair of the mourners was shaved (ukwewa ewutli, to shave the hair, profane and ritual) and, I was told that a bath would be the last act ending mourning.

Scene from the chungu-ceremony: The shaving of the hair.

In the afternoon I sent the father of the dead child a cotton kerchief as a gift, and when I met him later on, he told me I had participated in the burial of his child by that gift, saying, "You have buried my child with me".

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4. A visit to the chief's father's grave was paid in company with the chief and some of his *amafumu*. It was situated in a banana grove (*ilingelo*[1]) not very remote from the chief's hut. The grove of the present chief's father was on the ground-floor, about one hundred paces from its edge and was characterized by a small elongated basalt block about half a metre in height[2] and about forty centimetres in breadth. An *indole*-plant was also standing on the grave about one metre from the basalt block.

On this occasion the chief also told me of the special cases for which sacrifices are offered in this grove. These are performed only in cases of very serious accidents, sickness or famine which may overcome the chieftainship. In such cases a black cow is slaughtered after sunset at the edge of the grove. In the presence of the chief some pieces of meat of the slaughtered beast, together with some bananas, are laid down at the grove. The chief adds a prayer to his ancestors at some distance from the grove, referring to the evil by which the chieftainship or some special village of it has been afflicted. He enumerates all the names of his ancestors and asks them for their help.

The remaining pieces of the meat and other bananas are left in the grove during the night. When the next day dawns, the *amafumu* return and some *abanyage* divide the meat and eat it together. On this occasion the chief orders the removal of all remains of ashes from the huts. The ashes are thrown down in such unclean places as where leprous persons had been buried. After this has been done, the chief in conjunction with an *wapyage*[3] produces a new fire for the huts by twirling, and all other fires of the village, or villages, must be kindled anew from this "new-fire".

5. The reason for visiting an *undegwa* (*divinity*)[4] who dwelled in Ilungu an older age-set village[5] which seemed to the visitor to be a more ancient part of Kalumbe, was caused by the sickness of the chief's sister. In accordance with the custom of the Nyakyusa to bring women back to their father's village if they are very sick, the

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[1] Cf. Johnston, Glossary, pl. *amaninka*, p. 438; Markwardt, *ilingelo*, burial place, p. 388; *nsangelo*, grave of the dead chiefs, p. 121; Wilson, Introduction, p. 287, *ilingelo*, sacred grove; Merensky, p. 113.

[2] Cf. Fülleborn, p. 307.

[3] Cf. n. 2, p. 5.

[4] Cf. Johnston, p. 481.

[5] I proposed to call the special form of villages found within the Nyakyusa society, which are erected on the age-set principle, „age-set villages" (African Studies, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 79—89 June 1943), a terminology that does not clear G. Wilsons statements on the "Age Villages" (Introduction, p. 288 ff).